

IN THE DRAWINGS

Figure 1 of the Drawings has been amended by merely repositioning reference numeral 1. A Replacement Sheet and a marked-up copy are provided herewith.

REMARKS

By the subject Amendment, Applicants have amended Claims 1, 14, 16 and 17 and cancelled Claim 15. Accordingly, Claims 1 through 14 and 16 through 21 are presently pending herein. Claims 1, 10, 14 and 21 are presented in independent form.

The allowance of Claims 10 to 13 and 21 and the identification of allowable subject matter in Claims 7, 17 and 18 is acknowledged and appreciated.

In response to the objection to the Drawings and the Specification set forth in paragraphs 1 and 2 of the Official Action, Applicants have amended Figure 1. Specifically, Applicants have corrected a minor clerical error that previously existed in Figure 1. In Figure 1, reference numeral 9 has been moved to its proper location to designate the central housing of the blowout preventer 8 that is constructed in accordance with one of the preferred embodiments of the present invention. As shown in Figure 1, central housing 9 is positioned above flow tee 7. For the assistance of the Examiner, both a Replacement Sheet and a marked-up copy of Figure 1 are included herewith. Hence, Applicants respectfully submit that the concerns identified by the Examiner with respect to the Drawings and the Specification have been fully addressed.

The sole prior art rejection is set forth in paragraph 4 of the Official Action. Specifically, Claims 1 to 6, 8, 9, 14 to 16, 19 and 20 were rejected under 35 USC § 102 (b) as allegedly being anticipated by Van Winkle. Applicants respectfully traverse this grounds of rejection for the following reasons.

The Examiner has suggested that the cartridge 70 in Van Winkle functions in a fashion similar to the gripping inserts of the Applicants' invention. It is, however, important to note that in

the case of the Applicants' invention the gripping inserts have outer faces that are arcuate in shape and that generally correspond to the curvature of the exterior of the pump rod such that when the clamping members or rams are in their activated position the outer surfaces of the gripping inserts contact the pump rod and result in a concentration of the force exerted by the clamping members through the outer faces of the gripping members onto the surface of the rod. Such a structure is simply neither disclosed nor contemplated by Van Winkle.

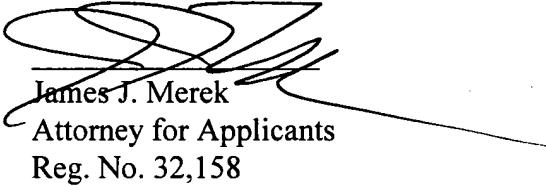
In Van Winkle, cartridge 70 includes both a vertically oriented longitudinal channel as well as a pair of flattened side surfaces on its outer face that extend radially outward from the longitudinal channel. The outer faces of cartridge 70 are *not* arcuate in shape as in the case of the Applicants' gripping inserts (see Figure 5c). When two opposing cartridges are driven toward one another, portions of the vertical channel in the middle of each cartridge may contact a pump rod or pipe extending therethrough. However, the flattened side surfaces of the outer face of the cartridge *cannot* contact the pump rod. Instead, the corresponding flattened side surfaces of two radially opposed cartridges will contact one another and *not* the exterior surface of the rod. This is significantly different from the structure claimed by the Applicants wherein the outer faces of the gripping inserts grippingly engage the pump rod to concentrate the load applied to the rod's exterior surface. Aside from features that allow for the replacement of cartridges 70, Van Winkle describes nothing more than a relatively standard BOP. Van Winkle is not concerned with gripping and holding a pump rod and hence the design of cartridges 70 neither disclose nor even contemplate the Applicants' claimed invention.

For the foregoing reasons, it is respectfully submitted that the amended claims of the present application are clearly distinguished from Van Winkle and are neither anticipated nor rendered obvious by the prior art. Van Winkle fails to teach or disclose the apparatus as described by the current claims. Applicants therefore submit that the subject application is in condition for allowance and that a timely Notice of Allowance be issued in this case.

It is believed that no further fees are due. However, should that determination be incorrect, the Patent Office Officials are hereby authorized to charge any deficiencies to Deposit Account No. 50-0562 and notify the undersigned in due course.

Date: 10/24/05

Respectfully submitted,



James J. Merek
Attorney for Applicants
Reg. No. 32,158

MEREK, BLACKMON & VOORHEES, LLC
673 South Washington Street
Alexandria, Virginia 22314
(703) 684-5633

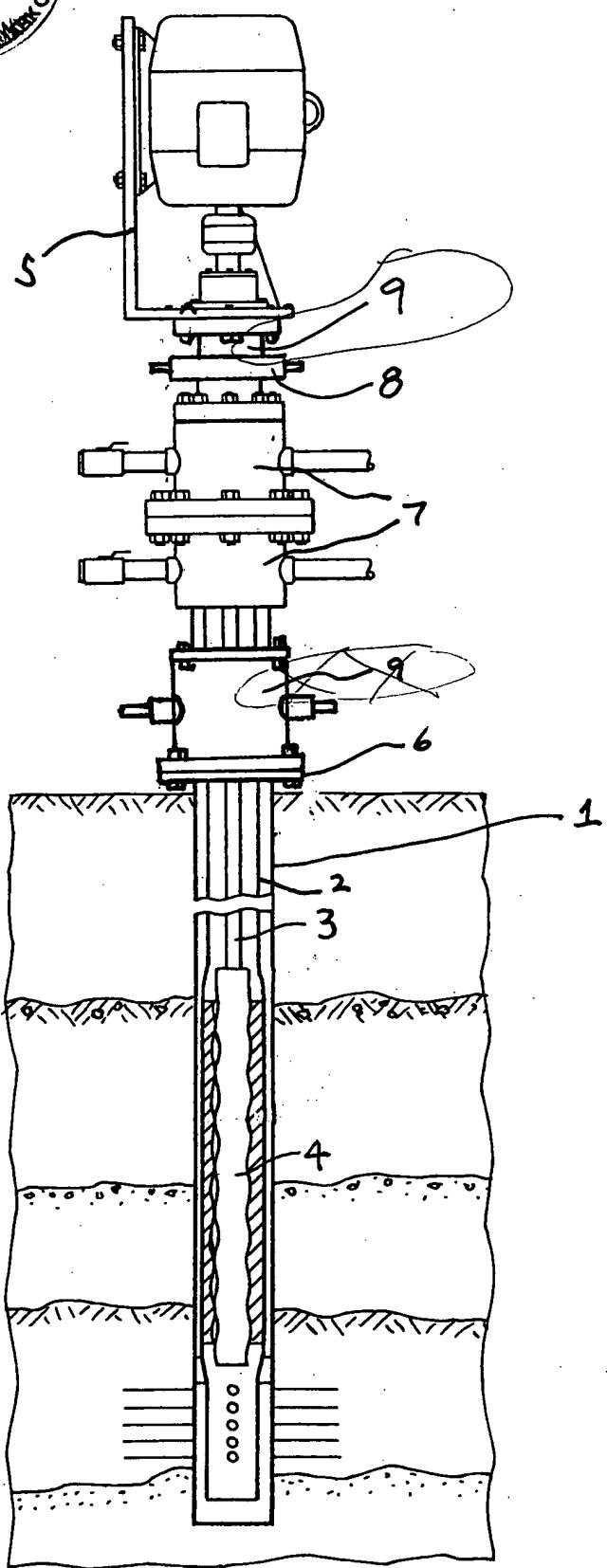


FIG. 1